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## **The Soldier's Training - Death to Initiative**

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It was spoken of the sons of Issachar that they understood the times in which they lived. The Father would have His children to be discerning of the times they walk in today. It is certain that we live in tremendous times and that the Father has prepared many “for such a time as this.”

Among our local body of believers God is doing a work that He would have us to be aware of. In 1998 the Father indicated that a wake-up call would be going out to the church. This wake-up call was likened to the announcement that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor at the beginning of World War II. A nation that had been asleep was suddenly awakened and men flocked to the recruitment centers to enlist for service to their country.

God signified the announcement of this wake-up call in several ways. The Father gave me a message to preach on December 7, 1997, Pearl Harbor Day, to a local body in Warner Robins that had invited me to speak. The message was about a wake-up call that was about to go out to God’s people. Furthermore, at the end of 1997 a group of prophets met with the leadership of our local body and they signified that the coming year would be one where the Father would begin to train the troops for the upcoming days of harvest. God’s work in the coming year was likened to being in boot camp.

In hindsight, it becomes apparent that we have indeed received a wake-up call and we have been in training. A number of parallels come quickly to mind. Our body has been stirred and there has been a heightened awareness of God’s calling among us. A feeling of “calling to service” has gripped many and the phrase “for such a time as this” has been seeded in numerous people’s hearts. We have heard the call to duty and have responded.

When one turns himself into the recruiter’s office, and then reports to boot camp, a number of things begin to happen. One of the first is that a different

authority structure is encountered. The recruit learns quickly that he must respond in obedience to authority to avoid much unpleasantness. We have seen a number of God's children in the body chafe against the authority. Some have washed out and some have gone AWOL. Our numbers are less than the total of those who began with us, but even as some left, others have begun to arrive to take up their vacated place of service.

Also, one of the first things a recruit experiences is the surrender of those things that are not necessary for his boot camp experience. His personal effects are surrendered and his hair is cut to conform to military requirements. We have experienced a surrendering and a cutting away of things that did not conform to God's will for His children. This has required tremendous sacrifice for many as they submitted to God's call for open repentance and surrender, but the end effect has been a sense of lightness as a burdensome weight has been removed from their shoulders. They can now train to run the race, unencumbered by the excess baggage they had been carrying.

A final, and perhaps most important, aspect of boot camp is that one learns to listen to the voice of authority and respond in obedience. This is foreign to many who present themselves to the recruiter. Many have only known the freedom of being their own boss. They have lived to make their own decisions and to determine their own way. What was okay for the civilian, however, is completely unacceptable for the soldier. He must move only at the voice of command. The greatest emphasis of his training is to teach him to no longer think for himself, but to listen intently for the command of his superior and to instantly obey. It is essential that he lose his independence.

This is the hardest part of the soldier's training and it is the cause of many washing out and of many going AWOL. It is hard to die to a self-directed life. It is hard to turn over the reins to another when you do not know what direction he may ask you to go, or what command he may issue. It is difficult to give up the things that have brought us comfort and solace. For the Christian, it takes supreme confidence in the Father to so surrender oneself to His will. Such obedience is not forced, it must come voluntarily. Many, therefore, never learn this aspect of their calling in Christ.

This is where we are at as a body of believers. God has been teaching us to move at His command. He is teaching us the true meaning of rest. It is a ceasing from our own works. The lessons are hard and must be often repeated and drilled into us. The tendency to move independently of the Father must be totally purged from our lives. Advancement in the kingdom is impossible without this transformation.

One must consider the challenge that is present in this area of our conformation to Christ. A deep root must be exposed and removed. One must go back to the very beginning of man's walk on this Earth to see the enormity of the challenge. Adam and Eve were the progenitors in whom this problem originated.

Satan was the first created being to go AWOL. He abandoned his post and sought to do his own thing. He chose self-direction over being directed by the will of God. In Ezekiel 14 his rebellion is exposed. Seven times he said, "I will ...." His downfall is revealed in his declaration. He chose his own works over the works of the God who created him. He was disqualified for service and cast down to the Earth where he brought the poison of his rebellion and offered it to mankind.

Listen to his words to Eve. "You surely shall not die [by eating that which is forbidden], but your eyes shall be opened. You will be like God, able to discern for yourself what is good and evil." Satan offered independence from God to Eve. Rather than living at God's command and for His pleasure, she could choose her own course. She embraced the lie and offered it to her husband.

Before their fateful choice, Adam and Eve were at rest. They had no works of their own. They did only what the Father instructed them to do. When they chose their own works, work became a curse to them. What came forth effortlessly before, now would come forth in great pain. The fruit that had been freely given, now would come at great effort and sweat would be a part of its coming forth. Adam and Eve chose striving over rest. ***God's call ever since has been for man to return to a position of rest.*** This will only come as man chooses to cease from his own works and to live in total obedience to the voice of the Father.

As Satan chose to decide for himself what was right and wrong, so did Adam and Eve. As Satan chose self-direction over obedience to the voice of God, so did Adam and Eve. Ever since man's life has been characterized by striving. Before the flood God declared, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever." God shortened the days of man's life and diminished the amount of striving. This was actually an act of kindness to mankind.

Man has continued to strive. Striving is the opposite of rest. God, however, continued to call mankind to rest, to cease from their own labors. Through Moses God gave mankind a written set of laws that expressed His desire for their conduct. Mankind found it impossible to adhere to these laws in his own strength. As Paul said, the law served only to increase his transgression. He found how unable he was to satisfy the requirements of God.

What mankind was unable to accomplish, the Father accomplished through His Son. The Son, who was equal with the Father, became subject to the Father, taking on the form of a bond-servant. He willingly chose the path that was opposite of the path of Satan and of Adam. Satan and Adam were subject to God, but they desired to be equal to God. Yahshua was equal to God, but He freely chose to subject Himself to God.

Yahshua life was a life of rest. There was no striving in His life. He had no works of His own. His confession was, "The works I do are not My own works, but the works of the One who sent Me." He further confessed, "I only do that which I see the Father doing." His obedience extended to the very words He spoke as He uttered, "The words I speak are not my own words, but the words the Father gives Me." Yahshua never chose the path of self-direction. He perfectly submitted Himself to the Father, and in so doing He offered a rebuke to Satan and hope to fallen mankind.

The Church today has little comprehended what Christ's life truly exemplified. He was a pattern for all of God's children who are being conformed to the image of Christ. We have erred by trying to follow God without repenting of the error of Adam. Many are trying to follow Christ as they erroneously practice the principle of Satan. Many have not repented of self-direction. Many have not

crucified the flesh with its desires and wants. These have failed to surrender every act and word to obedience to the Father.

The Church at large has adopted the heresy that as Christians they are to determine what their service to the Father will be. Right and wrong are still determined in the mind of man. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is still the source of the Church's service to the Father. Yahshua said, "MANY will come in that day and say, 'Did we not cast out demons, and perform miracles, etc., etc., in Your name?'" Yahshua will answer them, "Depart from me you who practice lawlessness . . . I never knew you."

These are lawless because they have not subjected themselves to the authority and command of God. They were under their own law. They were self-directed. They attempted to follow Christ after the principle of Satan.

How we do err today in choosing for ourselves what our activities will be. Many have rightly discerned a calling and anointing on their life, but they want to use it according to their own counsel. Consider how Moses discerned the calling on his life as a young man and tried to accomplish it according to his own counsel as he slew the Egyptian. Forty years in the wilderness were needed to humble him and prepare him for service before God. He had to be emptied of self-direction and confidence in his own abilities.

Consider Abraham who was given the promise of a great nation arising from his seed. In his own counsel and the counsel of Sarah he brought forth Ishmael, whom God totally rejected. How often we determine what we will do for God and we proudly ask Him to add His blessing to the work of our flesh and the product of our own counsel.

Now consider Yahshua who also discerned the calling of God on His life. At twelve years of age when he was found by His parents teaching in the temple He answered, "Knew you not that I must be about My Father's business?" Yet we are told that He submitted Himself to his parents and nothing else is heard of Him for another eighteen years.

Yahshua knew the calling on His life while He was yet a youth, yet He also discerned that the Father's time was not yet. Perhaps the greatest act of

obedience in our Lord's life is demonstrated by His spending thirty years in waiting for the Father to say, "Now is the appointed time." Yahshua demonstrated His complete submission to the Father's timing when His mother came to Him at the wedding of Cana and asked Him to do something about the shortage of wine. He responded, "Woman, do you not know My time is not yet?" He was saying, "I am submitted to the Father and I can only do what He says, when He says to do it."

How often do we discern a calling or anointing on our lives and then try to be the director of the times and ways in which it is manifested? If Yahshua submitted Himself to the Father's timing and waited for His direction for even the very words which He spoke, how much more should we? What if we discern a calling on our life and God chooses to make us wait thirty years to manifest it? Would we wait patiently? Our ultimate calling is to obedience. Can we fulfill that calling by chafing against the Father's will for us?

Paul is given to us as an example of one who followed the Lord with great zeal. Immediately after his conversion on the road to Damascus he discerned his calling and began to speak powerfully of the Lord, refuting those who were in opposition. God's timing for Paul's ministry was not yet, however. God led him to the desert region of Tarsus where he spent many years waiting until the Father's appointed time.

In our own body, many are chafing at the timing of the Lord. They discern callings and anointings within themselves and they know that a great harvest awaits the body of Christ. They have yet to discern that, as the recruits in boot camp, we must come to the end of our independence and self-direction in order to be fit for the Father's usage. What is acceptable for civilians, those pursuing their own careers and business objectives, is totally unacceptable for the soldier or the servant of God. The very things that make one successful in the world; initiative, ambition, and reliance upon inherent abilities, these same things disqualify the servant of God for service.

This is God's work among us now: that we would cease from our own labors; that we would enter into His rest and cease striving. To seek to do good works for Christ without being submitted to the voice of the Father is heresy. It is

practicing the principle of Satan in the Church. It is rising up and saying, "I will, I will, I will, I will ...."

The word spoken to one of our members concerning this year equally applies to each of us. We will all have the opportunity to say, "This isn't fair". According to man's reasoning, according to the flesh, what God requires of us isn't fair. He asks us to cease from our own works. The one who freely becomes a bond-servant does not seek his own will and therefore would never utter, "It isn't fair." Yahshua became a bond-servant and so must we. If ever one had a right to speak these words, it was Yahshua. Instead, He chose to say, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

Heed and understand the Father's work among us now. We have heard the wake-up call. Many discern their commissions and the work that lies ahead of them. God is now preparing us to be able to go forth into His fields for service. He is bringing us to the end of our own works. He is bringing us into His rest. May we all one day soon hear the words, "Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord."